

REMARKS

Claims 1-5, 7-9, 11, 12 and 14-20 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1, 4, 6, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18 and 20 are amended, and claims 6, 10 and 13 are canceled, without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. No new matter is added. Reconsideration in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Applicants appreciate the courtesies shown to Applicants' representatives by Examiner Tran in the March 9 personal interview. Applicants' separate record of the substance of the interview is incorporated into the following remarks.

The Office Action continues to reject claims 1-6, 8-10, 12, 13 and 15-20 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 6,233,925 to Hirota et al. (Hirota '925). The rejection of canceled claims 6, 10 and 13 is moot. This rejection of the remaining claims is respectfully traversed.

Independent claims 1, 8 and 12 are amended to include features of claims 7, 11 and 14, respectively. Claims 7, 11 and 14 are not rejected over Hirota '925. Therefore, claims 1, 8 and 12 are patentably distinct from Hirota '925.

Independent method claims 15 and 18 each recite a particulate matter removing step for removed particulate matter in an exhaust collected by a particulate filter and a temperature raising step for raising the temperature of an NO_x catalyst disposed in an exhaust passage of an internal combustion engine when the particulate matter collected by the particulate filter is removed. Independent method claim 20 recites a particulate matter removing step for reducing particulate matter in an exhaust collected by a particulate filter, an estimating step for estimating an amount of nitrogen oxides occluded in an NO_x catalyst disposed in an exhaust passage of the internal combustion engine, and a temperature raising step for raising the temperature of said NO_x catalyst on the condition that the amount of nitrogen oxides

estimated in the estimating step is less than a predetermined amount, when the particulate matter collected by the particulate filter is removed. Therefore, similar to claims 1, 8 and 12, claims 15, 18 and 20 are patentably distinct from the applied art.

Claims 2-5, 9, 16, 17 and 19 are allowable at least for their dependence on allowable base claims, as well as for the additional features they recite.

At least for these reasons, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection.

The Office Action also continues to reject claims 1-20 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 5,974,791 to Hirota et al. (Hirota '791). The rejection of canceled claims 6, 10 and 13 is moot. This rejection of the remaining claims is respectfully traversed.

As discussed above, claim 1 is amended to incorporate features recited in claim 7. Therefore, claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, a particulate filter for collecting particulate matter in an exhaust, and that a temperature raising section raises the temperature of a NOx catalyst when the particulate matter collected by the particulate filter is removed.

Hirota '791, on the other hand, teaches at col. 8, lines 25-43 and col. 16, lines 51-56 that the regeneration operation of a particulate filter (DPF 10a, 10b and 91) is performed immediately after the completion of the SOx recovery operation, so that the particulate matter trapped in the DPF burns when air is supplied to the DPF. That is, as taught by Hirota '791 in the cited sections, the temperature of the DPF is already high immediately after the SOx recovery operation. Therefore, Hirota '791 does not teach or suggest that a temperature raising section raises the temperature of a NOx catalyst when the particulate matter collected by the particulate filter is removed, as recited in claim 1. As such, claim 1 is patentably distinct from Hirota '791.

Independent claims 8 and 15 recite the features similar to those of claim 1. In addition, as described above, method claims 15, 18 and 20 recite the features similar to those

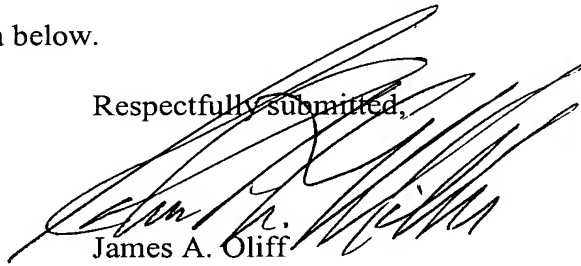
of claims 1, 8 and 15. Accordingly, these claims are patentably distinct from the applied reference.

Dependent claims 2-5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17 and 19 are allowable at least for their dependence on respective allowable base claims, as well as for the additional features they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-5, 7-9, 11, 12 and 14-20 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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